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## THE CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

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## WHAT TO DO NEXT?

## I

Human history is a good deal like the fabled weather of New Haven which according to President Hadley consists of a succession of crises. However, most of us are probably convinced that we live in a period of such rapid change in the conditions of human life that we may justly call it a crisis.

The outriders and advance agents of contemporary thought tell us that we are living at the beginning of the age of power, which is a greater change than has come over human life since the dawn of history. We may compare it, if we will, to the coming of the stone age or the iron age told of by anthropologists, but it is a greater change than these, for whereas men might be living in the iron age in Europe, and in the stone age in Patagonia, the new age of power is by its very nature world wide and all conquering. Formerly the world was several places—today it is one.

There is no need that I should describe to you the coming of the age of power. But you may permit me a personal remark. My father when a student in Union college in 1831 helped survey the railroad from Albany to Schenectady, and saw run the first regular passenger train, or almost the first regular passenger train, in the United States. Now, in less than one hundred years—one long generation—the railway train has gone round the globe.

It is the boast of the men of science that they have annihilated space, and indeed it is true that they have made the globe very small. If I can go to New York in one day

whereas it took my father ten, is it not plain that New York is only one-tenth as far away as it was one hundred years ago?

The first effect of the shrinkage of the globe caused by the age of power is to bring different peoples into unpleasant proximity. May I draw an analogy from what we see happening along the Mississippi after a freshet? A pond left by the retreating water, which was perhaps at first an acre in extent, may within a few days dry up to a mere puddle ten feet across. The fish, who when they had an acre of liberty were scarcely aware of one another's presence, are now brought by the shrinkage of the water almost into contact. The result is a battle in which every living creature in the puddle on account of the limitations of space is willy-nilly involved. A similar problem is presented to us at this instant for solution. Our race must somehow manage this little globe as one concern, or it looks as if most of us would perish.

Nobody sums up in himself the dominant temper of the hour better than Mr. H. G. Wells. He is an Englishman, and, therefore, represents American thought more completely than any American could do. He has no reverence for the past. Neither have Americans. He is tremendously interested in machinery and in the ideas of Mr. Huxley. So are our more strident voices. He has unbounded faith in education. So have all Americans. He does not see the use of poetry and art—in his *Outline of History* he never once mentions either Dante or Shakespeare. Thousands of Americans share in this deficiency.

Mr. Wells believes that help in the present crisis is to be sought in education. He thinks that a study of the history of the world will convince us that only in the general welfare of the race can we find our own true welfare. He has written his *Outline of History* to carry out this idea. It is the work of an artist, not of a scholar. But until some scholar can write in a way equally interesting to the plain man, the *Outline*, with all its faults, holds the field. It touches the imagination as no work of history in recent

years has been able to do. It appears to me that in the present crisis to touch the imagination is the principal thing. No amount of information about world problems will do you much good unless you are stirred to act with a wider vision than you have in the past.

We do not know whether Mr. Wells' new Bible will be as successful as his history in catching men's fancy and making them feel the need for unity. While we are waiting for his proposed book, in every direction, we hear of attempts to turn men's minds to world problems.

## II

One of the notions now in the air is that a course in World History, or in Contemporary Civilization, or in somebody's new Bible of human life, should be required of freshmen in our colleges. Such a course has already been introduced in a few colleges. The point I wish now to discuss is not the unquestioned value of the course, but, should it be required of all freshmen?

In most colleges it is pretty well settled that the studies required of all students should conform to the following standards: they should have a natural sequence, so that each exercise is a test of all that has gone before; they should, if possible, continue studies begun in high school; they should be general tools for future work; they should furnish a key to storehouses of thought otherwise inaccessible.

The languages, and for this purpose I reckon mathematics as a kind of a language, are such studies, and the freshman year is chiefly made up of language studies, including English composition, which is the one discipline that everybody agrees ought to be required. Whatever else a college may do, it must accustom the incoming freshman to use his mind hard. A man cannot use his mind hard unless he has acquired the habit. So much at least of the bitterly assailed doctrine of "formal training" no competent psychologist has denied. Language studies are required because they can be trusted to show the student the necessity of

vigorous mental work from day to day, and because in language study an ordinary instructor cannot fail to demonstrate a lazy student's incompetence, and to do it promptly, for every exercise is a test of what has gone before.

The proposed course, call it what you please, conforms to none of the standards which ought to be applied to any subject that claims to be required of all freshmen. It embodies no natural sequence (by natural sequence I mean that each step depends on what goes before, as in learning a language. There is no necessary order in learning world problems); it is not in any specific sense a tool for future endeavor; it is not a key to anything inaccessible. Only a thoroughly experienced instructor could handle it so as to demonstrate to a student, from day to day, the absolute need for vigorous work. Only an experienced teacher could keep it from appearing to a freshman like a mass of loosely related facts. "The world in ten minutes" is a nickname for the course in one place where it has been adopted.

The difficulty of securing enough skilled teachers for a required freshman course in world problems is so great that where it is introduced a device is used to take the control out of the hands of the ordinary instructor. Lectures are given once or twice a week to the whole class by an older and higher paid man, and the other meetings in small sections under ordinary instructors are based on these lectures.

This device will not solve the difficulty. For freshmen the young instructors in charge of the sections will be the real teachers of the course, and no university can afford to hire experienced teachers for all the sections. The difficulty is an old one. Every college president, for example, begins by thinking that the ideal course in composition would be taught by Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Kipling. Then he finds out that Mr. Chesterton asks one thousand dollars a lecture. We might as well consider what kind of a course is likely to be well taught by the men whom we can actually afford to get.

To introduce a course in world problems required of all freshmen might have far reaching evil consequences. In most colleges the curriculum of the freshman year is pretty well settled, and is all that remains of the original college course which was planned to give a student a definite intellectual outfit. The courses at present required in the freshman year keep their places because of their value as tools, or as disciplines, and not primarily for their informational importance. A course in world problems is an informational course. There are countless informational courses. If we introduce one required informational course pure and simple, we may be sure that the next change of fashion will force in another, and, presently, nothing will be left of the now fairly well organized introductory year in college.

In one or two colleges a somewhat different scheme has been tried. The new course in world problems has been made a part of the course in composition already generally required of freshmen. This arrangement combines all the evils just indicated with several more serious difficulties.

It makes teaching the student how to write, a secondary object of the combined course. No man will lecture on contemporary civilization without putting his subject first. How could a lecturer urge that he was only a side show to the important business of teaching the student what a sentence is, what good use is, how to spell and punctuate, and the like?

Now teaching the student to write is already (at least in theory) a secondary object in most introductory courses, such as history, philosophy and economics. But all college faculties in the United States know that this is not enough, that a course in which learning to write is the prime thing must be required of every student, and even then some will struggle through who write like the devil.

Besides to combine two objects in one course will not make it easier to get competent instructors, but harder. There is no supply of young teachers competent to teach both World History and the elements of writing, and to

procure the training of such teachers would require a larger outlay of money than to secure good instructors in the subjects taught separately.

To learn to write, a student must have something to say, and be interested to say it. No doubt an occasional instructor in English composition can be found who is enough absorbed in a topic in World History or Modern Civilization to be able to make it vital to some of his students, and to persuade them to form opinions about it which they are eager to express. Everything that can be done by such an instructor to direct a student's reading and thinking should be encouraged. Books like *Youth and the New World*, and Wells' *Outline of History* may be assigned, and topics required from them. But even such an exceptional instructor will have to be free to choose his topics, and will have to be free on occasion to let saving the universe take a back seat, and devote himself to saving the English language. An ordinary instructor in English composition, working on a schedule arranged by somebody else, will fail to vitalize the topics, and will get from his students half-bolted lecture notes in place of themes—poor stuff in matter, and zero in form—a kind of composition like nothing else in the world.

Whatever is done to meet the demands of the new age, to require a course in world problems of all college freshmen is not the best way to go to work. The questions discussed in such a course are the most intricate and perplexing that the human mind can unravel. They naturally belong to the later years of college. I leave it to other departments than those of modern languages to decide whether any particular course is desirable, and if so whether it should be required, for example, of all seniors.

Is not the hope of interesting students in the good of the whole world by any single course rather delusive? Is it not like Charlemagne's way of turning Saracens into Christians by marking them with the sign of the cross? I do not at all object to the sign of the cross, but question the reality of the

Christianity that Charlemagne imparted. This is no fanciful analogy. It is the closest in the world.

The noble ideals that float before the vision of those who wish to introduce a required course in world problems amount to a new philosophy of life—to a new religion. They wish to teach a man to consider in every act the good of all mankind. I think that this is only a new statement of one of the principles of Christianity, but anyhow it is a kind of new religion. To spread the idea we must adopt some of the methods that would be adopted to spread a new faith.

What would we do if we wanted to found a college to teach a religion (say Christianity for that is a handy one to talk about) to heathen? We should not be satisfied to have one course in Christianity taught by a Christian, and required of all students? We should want to have all courses (or nearly all) taught by Christians, and from a Christian point of view.

It is the same with our desire to bring men to labor for the good of all mankind. All the courses in college must be adjusted to this point of view. A shifting of emphasis in undergraduate instruction, and not the requirement of a course in world problems of all freshmen, is the solution that ought to be sought.

### III

The first question for us then is, what changes will the putting of world problems into prominence bring about in our modern language teaching? Obviously it will stimulate the study of modern languages. For a man to consider the good of the entire human race, he must be trained to surmount the barriers of language, and enter into the intellectual life of foreign peoples.

I know very well that I am not qualified to give an opinion. To me, however, it seems essential to teach the student to sympathize with the characteristic ideals of at least one foreign people, and that the way to do this is to urge him to make himself at home in its novels, plays, essays, and philosophy. Wide reading is so important that I suggest that

some books might be read in translation. The study of foreign literature in translation is not to be despised. Where a student's time is limited, I think it better for him to concentrate his efforts upon one foreign literature, rather than to try to gain a mere smattering of several languages.

I also think that we should do all we can to encourage the study of Latin. In addition to all good reasons long urged for the study of Latin there is now another. To our present object of awakening interest in the length and breadth of human history such a language as Latin, which is remote from English in space and time, and yet a part of the very fibre of our speech, offers peculiar assistance.

Another question for us is, what changes will the new emphasis on world problems bring about in the college teaching of English literature?

To say anything definite I find that I must distinguish between different types of college. Two types have grown up in the United States and it is to be hoped may persist because rivalry between differently organized educational institutions is an instrument for progress. A small country like France suffers, because of uniformity in the organization of its universities. In a vast country like the United States uniformity would be intolerable.

The two types I mean are the independent college and the university college.

Personally I have faith in the independent college. It is more likely to remember that a college exists primarily for those who are to be political and intellectual leaders. It can more easily maintain a common basis of study, so that all its students may have unified intellectual interests. It can somewhat escape the dispersive tendencies of the university college where too often the students find nothing in common to talk about, except intercollegiate games. Culture comes by conversation, but how can you have conversation when no two people possess any common body of knowledge?

An English teacher in an independent college is not likely to forget that literature is a kind of informal philosophy. He will doubtless point out to his students the lessons that literature contains about life. But he may consider only lessons for personal conduct, and may point them out in a parochial way. He may not realize that there are any great new problems pressing upon mankind.

In illustration let me tell an experience of a few years ago. I spent a day or two in the library of a professor of English in an independent college. I found books of poetry and criticism, histories of literature, Greek and Latin classics, the Shelburne essays; but no maps ancient or modern, no encyclopaedias or books of general reference, no political or economic histories; nothing on geology, physiography, zoölogy, biology, chemistry, physics, mechanics or engineering; nothing whatever on the social and economic problems that are convulsing society. It is quite probable that this teacher's interests were broader than his library, but I may be pardoned if I use this experience to indicate the real danger of aloofness from life which may beset the teacher of literature in an independent college.

The teacher of English in a university college is perhaps in no danger of remaining ignorant of the great currents of contemporary thought. He is surrounded by a group of technical and industrial schools in which every question of the day is sooner or later discussed. He is not likely to forget that there are world problems, but he may feel that it is no part of his business to discuss the relationship of literature to them.

For this attitude I think the main reason is an existing confusion between the university college and the graduate school. Graduate schools have been developed in the United States by taking advantage of the elective system in college to add many specialized courses partly made up of college students. The college had been extended like a telescope, by pulling at the top. Almost all professors who teach in a graduate school teach in a college as well.

One result of this is that our graduate professors have to teach as many hours a week as do those who direct undergraduate classes only; that the graduate year is as long as the undergraduate year; and that graduate professors are held to as much committee and administrative work as undergraduate professors. Only by exerting themselves to the limit of what is humanly possible can our higher professors compete in scholarship with the professors of foreign universities, who are truly graduate professors, who have nothing to do with undergraduate instruction, and who observe easier teaching schedules than those familiar here.

Another result of the lack of any line of demarcation between college and the graduate school is that our advanced courses in university colleges are taught as if for graduate students. In consequence of this most of our higher university college courses in English literature assume that the students are at a more advanced stage of development than is actually the case.

In graduate study literature is dissected and analyzed according to methods that have been found to work in natural science. We study the exact meaning of a piece of literature, its relation to other writings of the same kind, the conditions under which it arose, and we do not interrupt these investigations to discuss the message which it has for the problems of today.

I may compare a physicist in a graduate laboratory investigating the structure of a molecule of metal. He ought not to stop to tell the students the household properties of the element, the molecule of which he is studying. Men are supposed to know the ordinary uses of iron and copper before they enter the graduate school.

But what is suited to a graduate school is unsuited to a college. The time has now arrived when university college classes in literature may give more consideration to the undergraduates' point of view.

Somebody may object, is there not danger that a professor of literature will forget to teach his own subject if he begins

to touch upon world problems? In college classes, and with a subject now so well defined as English literature, I no longer fear this. I do not want to see courses truly for graduates made any less technical. I do not want to have college teachers less technically trained. But I do want them to consider more precisely the grade of advancement of the students whom they are teaching. I am assuming that the English teacher knows his Anglo-Saxon, his mediæval literature, his Shakespeare, and his Milton, whatever he may know or not know about later and less tested writings.

Those of us who teach literature both in a graduate school and in a university college must make two men of ourselves:—one the graduate man who has determined not to know anything in the world, except the origin of the Arthurian legend, or the development of the Elizabethan drama, or whatever his specialty may be;—the other the undergraduate man, who is competent to connect his teaching of literature with the latest world problems. Busy as we are, we must make ourselves busier, and hope for the time when American universities shall be rich enough and wise enough to designate certain men as graduate professors, and leave the rest of us free to broaden ourselves out, so that on occasion we may turn an undergraduate course in literature for a few moments into a course in economics, history, or philosophy, and, conversely, so that an instructor in any one of these subjects may on occasion teach his subject as if it were a course in literature.

We think it an excellent joke that in the old days a tutor in Yale College received a general appointment. He taught any subject that might be designated by the president. Is it possible that the joke is somewhat on us? If all college professors could qualify for such an appointment we should not find them leaving the requirement of clear and correct English to the English Department, nor should we find it hard to teach the message that English literature brings to world problems.

We have as much right as any college teacher to tell the students that our subject has something to contribute to world problems. The treasures of literature which for generations have been cherished by the fireside, from the simplest folktale to *King Lear*, contain in crystal words the plain man's wisdom about life.

Somebody may object: if it is the plain man's vision of life, why need we call attention to it? Our students will bring the plain man's informal philosophy of life from their homes. In past generations this may have been true, but we live in a new age. Our undergraduates (like the rest of us) are so bowled over by every kind of specialist from A to Z—Anthropologist to Zöologist,—that they are ashamed to confess any respect for the wisdom of the plain man.

You may object that the message of literature to the solution of world problems is after all, however, beautifully expressed, only the opinion of the vulgar multitude of mankind. Very well! I am a common, vulgar man, and I rather admire the opinion of the vulgar multitude. Common sense some call it.

To illustrate this popular philosophy one point will do as well as ten. The literature loved by the people always depicts the hero as rising superior to difficulties of heredity and environment by the force of his character. The folk-stories do not despise heredity. It turns out sometimes that the unpromising hero, though he did not know it, was the son of a king. They do not neglect environment. At least, there are dragons and three headed giants to sharpen the hero's mettle. But the great thing is his undaunted spirit and his determination to make the world over according to his vision of what the world ought to be.

My small boy brings home from school every day a geography in which I read statements like this: London is the greatest city in the world because it is situated exactly at the center of the land hemisphere of the globe, and near it are great deposits of coal and iron.

I take out a globe and observe that Madrid is, so far as I can see, just as near to the exact center of the land hemisphere of the globe as London, and close by it are deposits of coal and iron, which this same geography marks "undeveloped."

This confirms me in the plain man's philosophy which I find in literature, and I say:

London is different from Madrid chiefly because Londoners have had a mind to be different.

You may depend upon it that our college students will hear a plenty about the influence of race and environment upon world problems. But the common sense of the vulgar, treasured in literature, gives us something else to tell them. Man is able to some extent to stamp his ideals and his morality upon the world. The individual dies in the struggle, but other men carry on the fight. This deathless determination to make the non-human world conform to human morality is our best guarantee for the survival of civilization.